

THE
Duty of a Christian
Towards his
Neighbour Considered.
IN A
SERMON

Preached upon Occasion of the
Huntingdonshire Feast,
AT
St. *Swithin's* Church, **LONDON**,
The 24th of June, being the Feast of St. *J. Baptist*.

By **CHARLES TRIMNELL**, A. M. Prebendary
of *Norwich*, Rector of *Brington* in *Northamptonshire*,
and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Earl
of *Sunderland*.

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T O M Y
Honoured Friends and Countrymen.

Mr. { Thomas Newman.
Charles Bainton.
John Foster.
Robert Purchase.
Anthony Ashton.
John Bromhall.

Stewards of the *Huntingdonshire* Feast.

Gentlemen,

Having Preached the following Ser-
mon at your Request, To whom
our Country owes so much for
the Reviving of an useful Society, out
of a Charitable design, *I had no Room*
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Epistle Dedicatory.

left to refuse the making it Publick, when you were also pleas'd to insist upon that. For if you (for whose Use and Service it was more immediately designed) received any benefit from it, I cannot be without hopes, but it may be of some advantage to others; and I have nothing to say against Communicating what has the least appearance of turning to any serious Account, when I am duly required to do it: I wish only it had been better prepar'd to have answer'd my own and your design, however; you have it at your desire, such as it is. And that it may not wholly fail of that success which (from your readiness to bear an Expence at this time in Love to your Country, and the good Order observ'd by you in the discharge of your Office) I am perswaded

Epistle Dedicatory.

*ded you wish it ; I must intreat you to
joyn your earnest Prayers for a Bless-
ing upon it, to the Imperfect Petiti-
ons of*

Your very Affectionate Countryman,
and very Faithful Friend and Servant,

C. Trimnell.

THE

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Duty of a Christian
Towards his
Neighbour Considered, &c.

MATTHEW vii. 12.

*Whatsoever you would that men
shou'd do unto you, do ye even
so unto them: for this is the
Law and the Prophets.*

AS we cannot but see in every
part of the *Christian Religion*,
the Concern of God for the
good of *Mankind*, so it must
needs be a very comprehensive assu-
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rance of his Fatherly Care, to find his *Son* justifying so much as he does, upon the observance of this General *Rule*, which is here delivered in the words of the Text: And it being the *Foundation*, on which the *Happiness* of Men considered in any *Society* does so immediately stand: we shall do well upon the present *Occasion* to allow it a place in our *Thoughts*, both that we may the better fulfill its design, and also have the more honourable Opinion of that *Religion* which does so strongly enforce it; in order to which we are to consider these following things.

1. The meaning of the words as here given for a Rule.
2. The Equity of the Rule in them given.
3. The Use and Perfection of it, for our conduct with one another.
4. The Consequence of its being observed.

1. *The meaning of the words as here given for a Rule*; and this is commonly thought to be obvious enough, as what appears upon the first reading of them, without more ado; and yet taken in gross, and in an unlimited Sense, they seem to want the clearness and force of a *Law*, whether we consider them Positively as they are here delivered, or Negatively, to which the reason of them does equally hold; that is to say, we ought not always to do to Men, as we have expected, or might be apt to expect they shou'd do to us, upon changing of Places, because our *Expectations* may have been wrong, and we may be inclined to give way to such still; nor can it be always fit to forbear such treatment of Men, as we perhaps in like case wou'd be glad to escape, because it might not be fit that we shou'd, ^{to} make these cases plain by an Instance or two.

A Man in Authority can't be obliged to allow so much liberty to those that are under him, as he expected when it was his turn to obey, and may be disposed to do still, unless his Expectations were just, and fit for those to grant, who had the Government over him; nor ought a Man to forbear punishing another, barely for being conscious, he shou'd himself in such circumstances desire a Pardon, unless it was also fit he shou'd have it; so that the Rule does not purely depend upon Men's particular Wishes and Hopes, but the constant *Reason* and *Fitnejs of things*; which Reason of things, is to determine the Sense of these words before we can safely guide our selves by them, as it must do also the meaning of those, wherein our *Neighbours* are recommended to be *loved as our selves*, these plainly appearing to be of the same force and extent.

And

And if it be hereon demanded, to what purpose they serve, if of themselves they are not a Law, it is easie to answer, That, tho they are not a Rule without more ado, they are very near to it, and put things ~~not~~ in such a light, as we shall easily see what is fit to be done, and cannot avoid condemning our selves, if we do not that which we thus come to discover we shou'd ; nay, thus far 'tis directly a Rule that we ought to do that to others, which we think in like cases they shou'd do to us, and forbear doing that, which we think likewise they ought to avoid, because otherwise we make one Rule for our dealing with others, and a different one for their treating of us, which can never be right, when we stand in need of one anothers *mutual support*, and are all under *common subjection*, which must needs lay the same Rule upon us, or no Rule at all; for there is no end of letting every Man in this case be a Law to another, unless he is willing to be the same Law to himself.

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We may indeed have different thoughts of cases, when they are our own, and when they stand as another's, but we ought to suspect our Judgments, when they tend to excuse us from that, which we thought it the duty of others to pay, and we can scarce avoid a plain contradiction, if at or near the same time, we fail of doing that on one hand, which we expect, as our due on another; and such cases do often occur, in which cases though we shou'd be mistaken in what we expect, as belonging in reason to us; yet while we think so, we are to deal so with others, because we are to do what we think to be fit. Nay, tho we shou'd only be conscious, that in such cases we desire such advantage from others, if we are not aware of any reason that forbids such desires, we can have no reason against gratifying them, when they are in another, but shall have reason to do it, because it is always reasonable to prevent another's uneasiness, when there is no reason to hinder us;
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tho I am apt to think a case will seldom come to this issue, in as much as we rarely, if ever, allow our selves to desire any good from another, without thinking at the same time we have reason to do so; which reason whatsoever it is, is of as much force to oblige us to answer other Men's Expectations, as it is to warrant our own. From whence we are led to consider,

2. *The Equity of the Rule here given.*
 And we cannot surely make any question of our being oblig'd to act as we think others shou'd do, because we do nothing in discharge of such obligation, but what is fit to be done, our selves being Judges, and it is not our being concern'd can alter the case; a Rule of this kind must oblige all alike, or not be any direction at all, for who shall say, who is exempt? And who wou'd not be excused, if it depended on them? Which would plainly defeat the intent of the Law, and directly oppose that Equity which is always impartial, and provid-

providing as well for one as another, does not take its measures from any particular, but the common advantage, in which most will find their Account.

If others took the same freedom as we, cou'd we say they did ill, or at least that they acted worse than our selves? For their *Natural Right* is as large, and if they used it as far, as we cou'd not pretend to restrain them, so we shou'd not be much the better for our's; what therefore is fit in one case is fit in another; that is, as much the same as another can be, and that is the most equal Rule, without all peradventure, which alike consults the good of every one. Nor is it a less commendation, that it puts Men in such a way of promoting it, as that they cannot, without affecting to be wilder themselves, be at all in the dark, or at any great loss how to pursue it, for the Rule is as easie to apply to our Actions as it is fit to direct them. Which leads us to consider,

3. *The Use and Perfection of it, for our conduct with one another.* By its Use, I mean its being always at hand, and pointing plainly to what we shou'd do, and by its Perfection, its reaching every case in which one Man is concern'd with another: To have a sense of its use, we are to consider that was a Law in it self never so good, that is, never so fit to be the measure of acting, yet if it cou'd not be easily apply'd, it wou'd fall very short of attaining its end; was it either hard to come by, or to understand when we had it before us, we shou'd not be much the better for its being well made in other respects; but this Rule is difficient in neither of these, it is always at hand, and looking on it, we cannot but see the way we shou'd go.

It is not only easie to ask our selves the question, what we thought we had reason to look for in any such case, but our thoughts are almost ever upon it, we are still looking out for what shou'd

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come

come to us, and having something to do with others, in almost all the concerns of our Life we are in every thing that occurs, laying Schemes to our selves, how we ought to be used, and this being that which we are to consider, when we come to Act, 'tis more than easie, having recourse to a Rule that is so constantly with us, we must be at pains to avoid it, and can hardly help resolving upon it what we have to do, but shall find our selves bound by the Laws we prescribe.

Perhaps our Expectations from others in matters of latitude may be too great, but then we are to consider, that the allowance we shall of our selves be disposed to make others, will be altogether as straight, which offers a fair proportion between them, and it will be as easie as safe to take that which comes nearest to what we expect; and a readier rule we cannot have in such kind of cases, which have no establish'd one of their own, for be it a matter of receding

ing from what is our Right, or of shewing compassion, it will not be so easie to see how far we shou'd go, by abstractedly stating the case, or with respect only to those, for whose immediate sake it is to be done, as if we put our selves in their place, and think what we shou'd hope at their hands: This will carry us over many exceptions we shou'd otherwise raise, and let all the motives of Pity and Peace in their fulness of strength, our Hearts will tenderly open to let in the whole force of the case, and we shall readily yield to what its merits require.

In Causes of strict and rigorous Right, this Rule is yet of more immediate use, as we have a quicker and ~~clearer~~ ^{clearer} sense of what is strictly our due, ^{ill} than of what we can only hope to receive from Mens larger measures of acting, it is easier much to distinguish between *Right* and *Wrong*, than it is to say when Men do as they ought, where we cannot say that these are directly concern'd; and yet even in discerning of these, we see what obscu-

rity Mens *Corruptions* will bring upon
 the plainest Laws that are set to adjust
 them, nor can these clouds be any way so
 quickly dispersed, as by putting our selves
 in Expectation of that which other Men
 demand at our hands; this will help us
 through all those distinctions, which our
Partiality is apt to invent, and what is
 just in it self, will so appear in our Eyes.

Men sometimes think indeed, they
 have a right to that which is no way
 their due, but this is when their thoughts
 are only on that, and they do not consi-
 der them from whom we expect it, but
 in the case which we put, they are first
 engaged in thinking what they are to pay,
 and when that has narrowed their thoughts,
 there is no danger; that bare turning the
 Glass, just at that time, to see what they
 wou'd look for themselves, shou'd enlarge
 them too far, where 'tis well if they do
 not suppress their own Expectations as
 soon as they see them, turning against
 them, to be sure, it will not do more
 than set things in an indifferent view, and
 judg-

judging between themselves on each side of the case, will be like judging between two other persons, equally unknown or equally dear, and set to judge between either of these, we are not so very apt to mistake.

For it is not so much the difficulties of things, as the prejudices vvith vvhich vve come to consider them, that make them obscure, vvhen once vve are divested of these, they appear to us for the most part as truly they are, and our judgment is seldom vvrong, vvhen 'tis perfectly free : A great instance of this vve have in *David's* ready condemning himself in another Mans person, as the Prophet vvisely proposes the Case, vvhereas had he directly put him to think of the ill he had done, he vvould hardly have got so clear a Confession, some excusing or other might perhaps have crept in, and soft'ned the fault, but novv having pass'd sentence already, he left himself no vvay to escape, but is humbled under the sense of his sin : Of such use is this Rule to *Convince* as vvell
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as *Direct*, and we cannot indeed discover Errours, by any thing so well as that, which is in all our goings, the best light to our paths.

For of that extent and perfection it is, that it reaches every case that can rise between one Man and another, and on that account does highly deserve the Character of a *Royal Law*, as 'tis called by St. *James*, tho' it self comes under the general Rule of the reason of things, which must ever Regulate those *Desires* of ours which are here laid as the ground of this Law ; But tho' for this reason it is not that last principle, into which the fitness of all our Actions is duly resolved, yet it always is our more immediate direction, and stands alone for a Rule where we have no better view of the fitness of things, so that one way or other by means of this we have always a *Guide*.

For it takes place as has been already supposed by the way not only in those cases, which strict Justice decide, but also in those, which *common Humanity, Kindness,*

ness, Forbearance, or Charity recommend to our care, it likewise extends to the bearing of Just inconveniences from others, when they do nothing to bring them upon us, but what we should think our selves obliged to do, if we were in their place ; and this includes the entire mutual commerce of Men, in every Instance of which there is a particular way of Acting, that, in the opinion of all when they are free to consider, does most tend to advance their common design, which every one hopes to meet with, when it comes to his turn, and which, hoping so, he ought therefore to follow, when another receives the benefit of it.

On this account we need never be at a very great stand, in any Occurrence, how to proceed, we shall soon be able to answer all our own questions and doubts, by saying what we think another shou'd do, in the same state of enquiry ; and having no other Law we shall in every case be a Law to our selves, our Consciences all the while accusing or else excusing
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one another, and the more as we see the Effects of following or going against this excellent Rule, which may well stand for *the Law and the Prophets*, that is, all that they direct us to do, one toward another for our mutual Good. Which brings us in the last place to Consider.

4. *The Consequence of its being observ'd.*
 And was this Rule observ'd, a happy change wou'd be made in our Thoughts, Conversations, and Actions, to the ease of our selves, and the advantage of others, we shou'd in the first place think fairly one of another, and make in our minds, as kind allowances to whatever they did as their Actions would bear, preserving for them as great an Esteem as their Worth did require : For we know that we all expect this off others, and think it our due, as truly it is, and did we pay it as fully as we always demand it, we shou'd live at an easier rate with our selves, and with others, than at present we do ; for sure it cannot be a pleasing Reflection to think, that there is no
 goodness

ness at all in the World, while we remember at least that we are a part, and cannot pretend to be above all the rest, or exempt from those Imputations which we charge on the *whole*; and yet we hardly think so ill of our selves, as we often seem to do of the World, for did we do this, we cou'd never enjoy any peace in our minds which if we help to maintain, by considering such things, as do with some justness lessen our guilt, having the same considerations for others, wou'd help us to think much better of them, and of course to live more easily with them, for an ill opinion of Men robs us of all the comfort we cou'd hope to have in them, and therefore shou'd be as little encouraged as ever we cou'd, in love to our selves, nor shall we give any way to it, if we stand to this Rule.

Much less shall we Speak or Act without any occasion, upon such an opinion, but shall give Men good words to their face, and speak as well of them, as their cases will bear, and our duty allow

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we should never say any thing to the great disadvantage of others for the pleasure of saying it, nor take delight in other mens shame, for this we are so far from being willing they should do with ours, that we hope they will cover our weakness wherever they can. And did we all set our selves to do this, a great deal of ill will and contention wou'd be thereby prevented, and our own *Reputations* preserved more entire : For the liberty we take of detracting from others, will provoke them to make use of the same, as no Injuries are more rarely forgiven than those of the Tongue. Whereas was that inoffensive, there wou'd be less to stand in need of a pardon, as there wou'd be much less to enflame. The course of Nature wou'd be very quiet if that was still, which uses to set it on fire, much more if it mov'd to the praise of all that fairly deserved it ; if our answers were soft and our language endearing, what *Peace* wou'd abound in the *Earth*, and what *good will among Men* ? especially when we consider that that regard

gard to this Rule which keeps the door of our lips will carry us yet further than this, and make our Actions as good as our Words.

We shall not do to others any of those things which we hate, but allow all the treatment we love, we shall *not go beyond or defraud our Brother in any matter*, not caring our selves to be over-reached; we shall wrong none in their Bodies, Estates, or Relations, but leave them as safe as we wou'd have our own, giving to all, what on any account is their due; we should be exactly true to our trusts, and serve others as we wish to be served; we shou'd judge rightly between Man and Man, being call'd to decide any matter of doubt, and in all rewards and punishments that belonged to our place, respect only the deserving, of those over whom we were set, and the end of our Trust.

And was this but once the General practice, what comfort and ease shou'd we find in the World, and what pleasure in walking up and down in it ? with

what security shou'd we enjoy our several Portions, and how much wou'd be added to them by that ? when *Judgment runs down like Waters, and Righteousness like a mighty Stream* in the Prophets similitude. It has only the better likeness of a flood, overturning nothing, but Enriching and Fencing the ground all along as it goes.

And what is yet more for the praise of our Rule, and those that observe it, is, that not only justice will be punctually done, but mercy also will freely be shewn, as what Men with reason hope for themselves, when they stand in need of it, kind Admonitions will be given to those, whose slackness requires them, and all the mildness be shewn in punishing particular Persons, that is not cruel to more. We shall forewarn others of any danger we see them incurring, and do what we can to deliver them from it : We shall relieve the poor as far as our own occasions without extending, will fairly allow, and lend all that Assistance they lack, and which we have to give,

In this mutual supply of each others wants, none can fall into, or at least not lye very long in any grievous distress, for God has made sufficient provision for mankind in general, who cannot therefore suffer much unless from themselves, which will be so far from hapning, if all extend the pity which at some time they ask, that by every Man's *putting his hand to the Plow* every Man's *Yoke will be easy*, and every Man's *Burden be light* : there will be no leading into Captivity, nor will any Complaints be heard in our Streets.

If any shou'd notwithstanding their honest intention to walk by this Rule, yet fail so much of it, as to incur punishment for offending against any part of it, their design to regard it will soon convince them of their having done ill, upon trying their Actions by it, and make them patiently bear, what their faults have deserved, without conceiving ill will against those, whose duty it was to take cognizance of them ; so that either there will be no occasion for the Administrations of justice by way of Correction or Men will be quietly mended upon them : And thus the words of the Saint of this Day will have another fulfilling

filling. *Every Valley will be Exalted, and every Mountain and Hill will be brought low, the crooked will be made strait, and the rough places plain. Happy are the people that are in such a case, yea, Blessed are the People who have this Law for their Guide.*

How ought we then to strive for this happy Estate? How should we labour to partake of this Rest, which is to be had on this side the Grave, thro' that effect this practice will have upon the Course of the World? And tho' it shou'd not prevail on so many, as to give it self an Universal extent, yet they who maintain it are sure to avoid that self Condemnation, that cannot be parted from acting against it, and must always have better grounded, and livelier hopes of meeting with all that is equal and kind at other Mens hands.

But whither it immediately brings this advantage or no, or how much harder measure soever we find, than our dealings deserve, we must not alter our Course, nor learn forwardness from those that are froward; it is a great instance both of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that he has given us such Laws of living together, as make to our present

sent advantage, but we are not therefore at liberty to set them aside, if we do not find them immediately turn to account, for it has pleased God to establish them so, as to make it the interest of all to observe them, under any sort of discouragement here, by providing a further reward for all that obey them, than can be hoped from the State of this World, and a greater punishment for those that transgress, than that can inflict.

And well is it for us that such a Provision is made, without which our own observation would hardly let us expect, those Blessed Fruits, which yet we cannot but see would grow on this excellent ground, upon which let us therefore proceed in whatever we do, and always be ready to pay this debt of our Natures, that the common stock may be thereby improv'd to the profit of others, and tho' out of this we should not have here the greatest and quickest returns, yet the *measure with which we have meeted*, will be made up at the last and our *Cup will be full*.

Let this prevail with us to go on in well doing, and abound in good works, of which *in due Season, if we faint not, we shall reap the advantage*.

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Let us of this *Assembly* especially (to whom the Place of our Birth does in somewhat a more peculiar manner seem to assign a common concern) give proof of our coming together for the Honour of God, and the advancement of all *Sociall vertues*, by pursuing these ends in all our Communications with Men, let us *bind this Law* of our Gracious Redeemer, and Lord of us all, *round about our necks*, and write it upon the Table of our Hearts, that it may be the Ornament and Guard of our lives, and let it be our particular Guide in what relates to the present Solemnity, that there may be no *spots in our feasts of Charity*, but that others may be invited by our Friendly and Christian Conduct to use the same means of promoting Compassion and Peace, and whatever else belongs to the part of *Brotherly Love*.

Let *Good will* amongst us help to the better agreement of our Country in General, and our particular kind *Combinations* add to the Peace of the Church and strength of the state, so shall no *heaviness* come at the end of our mirth, but this Days *satisfactions* will make way for higher *Contentments* and carry us on with the more Pleasure to the filling up of our Joy, Which God of his infinite mercy grant for the sake of his Son Christ Jesus, to whom with the Father in the Unity of the Spirit, be all Glory and Honour now and for ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

